



## News Release

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### **Prepare for the Upcoming West Nile Virus Season**

*Water in your backyard – Drain it, Replace it or Dunk it*

(Salt Lake City, UT) – The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) wants you to “Fight the Bite!” as you head outdoors this summer. As you spend more time outdoors, the risk of getting mosquito bites increases, therefore increasing your risk of West Nile virus (WNV) infection. One way to help “Fight the Bite!” is to control mosquitoes in your own backyard.

Utah, especially northern Utah, is experiencing a wet spring, and high runoff levels are expected in several areas of the state. Mosquitoes need water and warm weather to breed. When the weather starts to warm up, it is time to check your yard for standing water.

This year, protect your family from mosquito bites — and WNV — by looking for places in your yard where mosquitoes can breed. Birdbaths, swimming pools, old tires and plant containers can all become mosquito nurseries. There are three easy things that you can do to reduce standing water and the number of mosquitoes this year – drain it, replace it or dunk it.

“Drain it” means that unnecessary standing water should be drained. To prevent standing water, get rid of old tires or unused items in your yard that gather water, and turn wheelbarrows or other items over so that water doesn’t collect in them. For water in items such as birdbaths, you should “replace it” by draining and changing the water twice a week. Replacing the water will keep mosquito eggs from hatching in the items. For larger bodies of water, such as stock tanks and swimming pools that cannot be drained or have

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water easily replaced, you can “dunk it” by using mosquito dunks. Available at lawn and garden stores, mosquito dunks are inexpensive, harmless to pets and people, and eliminate mosquitoes before they begin biting.

“West Nile virus is now a yearly presence in Utah and it isn’t going away,” said Lisa Wyman, epidemiologist, UDOH. “Last year, West Nile virus was detected in every major area of the state, from rural southern areas to the urban Wasatch Front.”

WNV surveillance in Utah is underway and will continue throughout the summer and fall. So far in 2006, no WNV activity or human cases have been detected in Utah. In 2005, Utah reported 52 cases of West Nile virus in people aged 6-86 years, with an average age of 43 years. Twenty Utahns were hospitalized with serious illness and one died.

For more information, call your local health department or visit [www.health.utah.gov/wnv](http://www.health.utah.gov/wnv). Throughout the WNV season, the UDOH Web site will be updated each Wednesday with available detection information.

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*The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public’s health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.*